Cahiers du MONDE RUSSE

**Cahiers du monde russe**
Russie - Empire russe - Union soviétique et États indépendants

**52/2-3 | 2011**
**L'URSS et la Seconde Guerre mondiale**

# Islamically informed Soviet patriotism in postwar Kyrgyzstan

*Le patriotisme soviétique influencé par l'islam dans le Kirghizstan de l'après-guerre*

**Eren Murat Tasar**

OpenEdition Journals

**Electronic version**
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/9340
DOI: 10.4000/monderusse.9340
ISSN: 1777-5388

**Publisher**
Éditions de l'EHESS

**Printed version**
Date of publication: 15 November 2011
Number of pages: 387-404
ISBN: 978-2-7132-2352-5
ISSN: 1252-6576

**Electronic reference**
Eren Murat Tasar, « Islamically informed Soviet patriotism in postwar Kyrgyzstan », *Cahiers du monde russe* [Online], 52/2-3 | 2011, Online since 12 September 2014, Connection on 20 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/9340 ; DOI : 10.4000/monderusse.9340

EREN MURAT TASAR

# ISLAMICALLY INFORMED SOVIET PATRIOTISM IN POSTWAR KYRGYZSTAN

Though far removed from the front lines of World War II, Central Asia's religious life experienced a period of tremendous dynamism in the war's immediate aftermath. The postwar changes in Islam testify to the emergence of a new field of possibilities for harmonizing Soviet and Islamic affiliation among a significant portion of the population. Many Central Asian Muslims found that dedication to Islam and patriotism for the USSR reinforced one another. World War II generated an inclusive environment, based on notions of justice and collective sacrifice that found resonance in Islamic tradition. This environment gave birth to an impulse among Central Asian Muslims to belong to the Soviet Union, compelling them to seek a platform of common values that they could share with the state. This platform allowed many Central Asians to view themselves as good Soviet citizens *because* they were good Muslims.

This paper examines attempts by Muslims in Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the second half of the 1940s to belong to two communities, Soviet and Islamic. It argues that World War II created an opening in the region for Muslims to make sense of their place in Soviet society on Islamic terms by articulating an Islamically informed Soviet patriotism. Through an analysis of two conceptual spaces, which I term the views "from above" and "from below," it demonstrates that the war released an impulse towards coexistence between state and society in Central Asia. The first space, "from above," refers to the quest for legitimacy of a muftiate, or Islamic organization, established in 1943. This Central Asian muftiate, known by the Russian acronym SADUM, forcefully argued that Islam had a productive role to play in Soviet society. It deployed this argument to convince Muslim communities across the region to submit to its administrative authority throughout the 1940s. The second space, "from below," refers to the flurry of voluntary, patriotic labor

I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this paper.

*Cahiers du Monde russe, 52/2-3, Avril-septembre 2011, p. 387-404.*

and charity organized by mosques in the second half of the 1940s. Taken together, these efforts to harmonize Soviet and Islamic affiliation into a unitary whole reflect a dynamic, if uncertain, effort to move beyond the anti-religious violence of the dekulakization and collectivization drives as well as the Cultural Revolution and Great Terror.

This attempt by Muslims to bring together two seemingly incompatible affiliations, Soviet and Islamic, emerged from the convergence of two historical trends present in Central Asia during and after World War II: the relaxation of official pressure upon religion, and the spirit of collective sacrifice permeating Soviet society as a result of the cataclysm. Stalin's religious reforms created a legal framework for religion to exist in the form of institutions such as the Russian Orthodox Church.[1] No one in the Party-state knew how to implement these reforms on the ground, least of all with respect to Islam; therefore, regulation of religious affairs was in a state of total chaos in Central Asia during the war and in its aftermath.[2] In a wartime and postwar climate that lacked concerted public castigation or local supervision of religion, room emerged for people, Muslim or otherwise, to attach sacred meaning to the war.[3]

Beyond the immediate wartime context and its aftermath, this coexistence of Soviet patriotism and Islamic belonging undoubtedly owed a debt of gratitude to precedents established in the early years of Bolshevik rule in Central Asia. The period from 1921-1926 in particular witnessed an accommodationist, conciliatory policy towards Islam that facilitated the formation of partnerships between high-profile 'ulama, local Bolshevik organs, and secular Muslim intellectuals.[4]

---

1. On the reforms, see T.A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: from the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

2. I have elsewhere argued that Soviet policies toward Islam reached unprecedented heights of moderation (unprecedented for the postwar period, at least) increasingly from the late 1940s onwards through the onset of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign in late 1958/early 1959. This moderation amounted to all but benign neglect in certain policy areas, notably treatment of unregistered religious figures, and rested upon the influence of the moderate line towards religion within the Party-state in the years preceding Khrushchev's rise to supremacy. See Eren Murat Tasar. "Soviet Policies toward Islam: Domestic and International Considerations" in Phillip Muehlenbeck, ed., *Religion and the Cold War: a Global Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 158-181.

3. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s state funding and support for anti-religious propaganda in Central Asia reached lower levels than at any point perhaps since the earliest years of Soviet power. The archives of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Kyrgyz Party's Central Committee contain references to outdated propaganda posters (by as much as a decade, in some cases) at libraries and red chaykhanas throughout Kyrgyzstan, and also suggest that propaganda lecture cycles conducted by the department for Party members tended not to include talks on anti-religious themes. To illustrate the point, one of the department's inspectors observed in a 1948 visit to Tian Shan Province that "a mosque is located across the street from the [Jumgal] district Party committee headquarters, along with the buildings of the district financial office and the home of Comrade Babaev, head of the district Department of Propaganda and Agitation. From a sanitary perspective, the mosque looks better than Comrade Babaev's home." KRSDBMA 56/1/374/187 (1949).

4. The dramatic, and perhaps hitherto unappreciated dimensions of this cooperation are illustrated in Ashirbek Muminov, Uygun Gafurov, and Rinat Shigabdinov. "Islamic Education in

In Central Asia, this phenomenon is often associated with the Jadids, who, according to Adeeb Khalid, successfully "transformed themselves into Muslim Communists and asserted the claim, again, to speak in the name of the Muslims of Turkestan."[5] Yet attempts to weave together revolutionary and Islamic reformist ideas were hardly confined to the Jadids.[6] Intellectual precedent existed for attempts to harmonize the Bolsheviks' political objectives with Islamic values as promulgated by certain 'ulama.

The Islamically informed Soviet patriotism that emerged during the postwar years differed from this earlier pattern of cooperation in both content and scope. It embraced a much larger component of the Central Asian population, which, by this point, had experienced three decades of Soviet rule as well as social and economic mobilization in the cause of the war. More significantly, it went beyond identifying potential convergences between Islam and Communism. Rather, it emphasized that being a good Muslim was a *prerequisite* for being a good Soviet citizen.

## Kyrgyzstan during and after the war

Soviet Kyrgyzstan will strike some readers as an unconventional and perhaps unusual place to study the encounter between the Soviet state and Muslim communities. The most famous centers of Islamic learning in Central Asia, Bukhara and Samarqand, were far removed from its borders, while Tsarist, Soviet, and some modern-day scholars have associated its historically nomadic population with "superficial" Islam (based on positivistic assumptions about the measurability of religious devotion on an ethnic basis).[7] At first glance, Kyrgyzstan seems marginal to the history of Islam in Central Asia.

---

Soviet and post-Soviet Uzbekistan" in Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, and Stefan Reichmuth, eds., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London: Routledge, 2010), 224-238. Pro-Bolshevik sentiment was even more pronounced in Dagestan, where, according to a recent study, "the majority of 'ulama and mudarrises sided with the Bolsheviks" during the Civil War, while "shari'a courts, maktabs, madrasas, halqas and wirds continued to exist de facto within the Soviet state institutions, and some were even incorporated *de jure*." See Vladimir Bobrovnikov, Amir Navruzov, and Shamil Shikhaliev, "Islamic Education in Soviet and post-Soviet Daghestan" in the same volume, 112-114.

5. Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 288.

6. Paolo Sartori, "Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: a view from Central Asia", *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010): 320; Paolo Sartori. "What went wrong? The failure of Soviet policy on *shari'a* courts in Turkestan, 1917-1923," Ibid., 411-412.

7. For arguments against this approach in reference to the Kyrgyz specifically, see Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1994), 65; Till Mostowlansky, *Islam und Kirgisen on Tour: die Rezeption "nomadischer Religion" und ihr Wirkung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 30-62, 78-83. For modern-day implications of the discourse of "nominal" Kyrgyz Islam, see Baris Isçi, *"Proper" Muslim against "authentic" Kyrgyz: the formation of Islamic field and secular challenges in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan* (Ph.D. Dissertation, 2010, Washington University in St. Louis).

Yet, for two compelling reasons, the republic offers an ideal case study of the complex responses exhibited by Muslims to the wartime climate and its aftermath. First, the heavily populated agricultural swathes of the Farghona Valley fell partly within its borders, and indeed constitute the geographic focus of much of this paper. These areas belonged to the broader cultural and religious sphere of the valley and did not significantly differ in religious practice, linguistic preference, or ethnic makeup from neighboring districts in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.[8] It is therefore misleading and erroneous to speak of the republic as completely distinct, or isolated, from more "Islamic" parts of the Central Asian region. Second, the borders assigned by Soviet planners to Kyrgyzstan in 1924 and 1936 brought together historically nomadic and sedentary zones under one roof.[9] The Kyrgyz documentation therefore offers the historian an opportunity to capture the full diversity of Muslim responses to Soviet modernization, from agricultural collective farms that differed little from their counterparts in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to the collectivized ranches of the high Tian Shan.

Kyrgyzstan also does not often emerge in discussions of the effect of World War II upon Soviet Muslims.[10] Yet the conflict's impact on the republic was profound.[11] Between the Nazi invasion and September 1944, 363,144 residents of Kyrgyzstan, or one in four of the republic's inhabitants, were drafted into the Red Army.[12] Soviet propaganda hailed the participation of Central Asia's indigenous nationalities[13] in the war's front lines as a symbol of interethnic Soviet patriotism and Socialist solidarity.[14] For decades after the war, Kyrgyz audiences were reminded

8. As of the 1959 census, Kyrgyzstan's population included 836,831 Kyrgyz (40.5%), 623,562 Russians (30.2%, mostly in the northern part of the republic) and 218,640 Uzbeks (10.6%, most of them in the south). *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 g.* (M., 1962), 206-208.

9. On the implications of the 1924 national delimitation and 1936 Stalin constitution for the borders of Kyrgyzstan, see Usenaly Chotonov, *Ata meken tarykhy: XX kylym* (Bishkek, 2001), 30-31.

10. The wartime fate of two Soviet Muslim groups affected much more directly by the Nazi invasion, the Crimean Tatars and the Chechens, has been examined in several scholarly studies, including, most recently: Gul´nara Bekirova, *Krymskotatarskaia problema v SSSR, 1944-1991* (Simferopol´, 2004); Movsur M. Ibragimov, *Chechenskaia Respublika v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny* (Nal´chik, 2007); Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond memory: the Crimean Tatars' deportation and return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

11. For a recent discussion of the war's impact on Tashkent, the capital of neighboring Uzbekistan, see Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 119-172.

12. Of these, 42.2% hailed from Frunze province (today's Bishkek), 21.6% from Osh, 15.8% from Jalalabat, 12.8% from Ysyk Köl, and 7.6% from Tian Shan (today's Naryn). The figure includes 1,395 women. S.K. Kerimbaev, *Sovetskii Kirgizstan v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine 1941-1945 gg.* (Frunze, 1980), 215-216.

13. It seems probable that Kyrgyz outnumbered Russians given that the former tended to have larger families. By way of example, Kyrgyz soldiers comprised 86.2% of the ranks of the 107th Cavalry Division (founded in Kyrgyzstan) though they occupied only 26.9% of its leadership positions. (Russians filled 44.1% of those positions). Ibid., 217.

14. Indeed, the policy of promoting "national" units (especially cavalry brigades) within the Red Army had a clear legitimizing purpose vis-à-vis Soviet Muslims. In a 1943 session with military agitators, for example, Mikhail Kalinin alluded to the 1916 anti-Tsarist rebellion

that the 385th Artillery Division, which was established in Kyrgyzstan, participated in the attack on Berlin on April 16, 1945.[15] The cultural and social experience of total mobilization naturally extended well beyond the ranks of soldiers drafted into the army.[16] Virtually the entire republican population from the ages of 16 to 60 enrolled in anti-aircraft and chemical defense training courses, for example.[17] Wartime Kyrgyzstan also featured a flurry of literary, musical, and artistic production in the cause of the war, some of it the result of collaboration between Kyrgyz intellectuals and evacuees from the Western USSR.[18] These and other examples illustrate the ways in which the war impacted families and individuals in Central Asia despite its distance from the front.

On these grounds, one may legitimately position Kyrgyzstan at the center of any analysis of the war's impact on Muslims and Islam in Central Asia. World War II changed the lives of the republic's residents so profoundly precisely because many of them were Soviet citizens *and* believing Muslims.

## Source and methodological problems

This paper relies on two bodies of documentation: archival records of the state body charged with supervising religious affairs – the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) – and correspondence of the Central Asian muftiate (SADUM). As with any Soviet source concerning religion, these documents present significant methodological challenges and limitations. Soviet society restricted the set of institutions that could produce written output concerning religion. The vast majority of source material on Islam consequently claims official provenance.[19]

---

(whose epicenter was Kyrgyzstan) by contrasting Soviet conscription policies with those of the Russian Empire: "In the Tsarist system, Azerbaijanis and the peoples of Central Asia – Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and others, did not fight and were not admitted into the army. The Tsarist state did not trust them or involve them into military affairs…[But] now all peoples have the same rights. And all the peoples of the Soviet Union, even those that were once considered backward, now participate in warfare." Kerimbaev, *Sovetskii Kirgizstan*, 214.

15. Bakai Sultanaliev, *Kirgizstantsy v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine* (Frunze, 1977), 24.

16. Perhaps an unparalleled visual panorama of wartime Kyrgyzstan is offered in the film *Dzhamiliia* (Irina Poplavskaia, 1969), based on Chingiz Aitmatov's (1928-2008) 1959 novelette of the same name and narrated, in part, by the author.

17. Asel´ T. Toktomatov, *Deiatel´nost´ Sovetov Kirgizii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1941-1945 gg.* (Frunze, 1986), 29.

18. For example, November 1942 saw the staging of an opera based on traditional Kyrgyz music, *Kokul*, by Mikhail M. Raukhverger (1901-1989). The libretto was co-written by O. Sarbagyshev and V. Vinnikov. Kerimbaev, *Sovetskii Kirgizstan*, 166.

19. This does not mean that traditional methods and genres of Islamic textual production came to a halt. Sources of this variety written during the Soviet period are currently being uncovered by Central Asian scholars and, when available, will serve as an important new body of material for the study of Islam in twentieth century Central Asia. For an anthropological analysis of female Islamic figures in Central Asia that makes some use of some hand-written family histories, see Habiba Fathi, *Femmes d'Asie centrale contemporaine: quête des ancêtres et recompositions identitaires dans l'islam postsoviétique* (P.: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2004).

For reasons discussed in this article, SADUM's staff, in particular, had every reason to praise Soviet policies towards religion, and to eschew mentioning past intervals of anti-religious violence.[20]

Source limitations and bias constitute the bane of all historians. This reality should not, however, discourage scholars from studying the social history of Muslim communities in Soviet Central Asia. When scrutinized wiith an appropriate degree of imagination and analytical acumen, Soviet documentation concerning Islam offers unparalleled insight into the everyday realities of the encounter between the Soviet state, Islamic institutions such as mosques (within and beyond SADUM), and Muslim communities. One must employ these sources, however, with two caveats in mind.

First, CARC and SADUM did not devote equal attention in their correspondence to all Central Asian Muslims. The Soviet state employed the nebulous category of "believing Muslims" (*veruiushchie-musul´mane*) while the muftiate simply referred to "the Muslims" (*musulmonlar, mo'min-musulmonlar,* or sometimes *oddiy musulmonlar*). In fact, the individuals who came to the attention of these two entities were largely those who practiced religion in one form or another, most especially those who frequented mosques on Fridays and/or the two *'eids*. During the 1940s this amounted to a considerable component of the still largely rural population.[21] Non-observant Muslims, or for that matter atheists belonging to indigenous nationalities, who practiced certain traditions associated with Islam in Central Asia (e.g., frying dough in honor of one's ancestors) failed to attract the attention of either CARC or SADUM, albeit with some exceptions.[22] The Islamically informed Soviet patriotism analyzed in this paper therefore largely concerns mosque-going believers, though there is no reason to suppose that it might not have resonated with a significant part of the larger Muslim population.

Second, questioning the sincerity of those Muslims who advanced this patriotism offers little benefit to the historian. Whether they did so out of firm personal conviction, to juggle the competing emotional demands of experiencing repression and subsequent total war in the space of one decade, or merely to acquire the confidence of local officials, is impossible to determine. Rather than analyzing motive or material incentive, this paper therefore argues that the war created a new field of possibilities for harmonizing Soviet and Islamic affiliation in word and deed.

---

20. On the anti-religious policies of the Soviet state in Uzbekistan during the Cultural Revolution and the Great Terror, see Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (Westport, CT: Fraeger, 2001).

21. It is impossible to determine the percentage of Central Asian Muslims who practiced religion. Suffice it to say that the panorama of Islamic observance in the 1940s would have been unrecognizable to an observer in, say, the 1970s. For example, an average of 500 people attended the dawn prayer at the Ravat Abdulloxon mosque in Osh on a daily basis during the 1940s. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/217 (1947). In district centers in the south i.e., small towns, the corresponding numbers for the morning prayer ranged from 18-100. KRBMA 2597/1s/7/51 (March 30, 1948).

22. In contrast, much debate occurred within the Party about the appropriateness of certain religious practices, such as circumcision, for Party members.

This process certainly contained an element of what Stephen Kotkin has termed the "obligatory language for self-identification," which became "the barometer of one's political allegiance to the cause."[23] Yet its central and defining element was creativity from the ground up. Muslims, rather than the Soviet state, developed the concept of Islamically informed Soviet patriotism as a response to the war's demands, Stalin's religious reforms, and a postwar climate featuring relatively little pressure upon Islam. This amounted to nothing less than an attempt from *outside of the state* to carve a conceptual space for Islam in a society ruled by atheists.

## A view from above: SADUM

Created largely as an afterthought to Stalin's wartime religious reforms, the Central Asian muftiate hungered for legitimacy within state and society during the second half of the 1940s.[24] To this end, the mufti and his associates presented SADUM as the organizational manifestation of Soviet Muslimness. They sought to construct a platform of common values that the broader Muslim population could share with officialdom, including sacrifice, devotion to homeland, physical labor for the common good, rebuilding the country after World War II, and justice.

The muftiate tapped into a broader societal impulse towards coexistence, as well as apparent popular jubilation at the symbolic significance of its establishment. Yet SADUM also harbored less high-minded reasons to reconcile Soviet and Islamic sources of affiliation. Established in 1943 effectively by state decree, the organization had no legitimacy or presence in Central Asian communities.[25] Such an entity, moreover, lacked precedent in the region's history.[26] It therefore encountered some measure of suspicion from both the Party-state, which remained nominally committed to liquidating religion, as well as ordinary Muslims across Central Asia's five republics. The latter, in particular, saw no reason to hand control of the mosques in their communities, not to mention donations, over to a distant and alien Islamic bureaucracy based in Tashkent. SADUM therefore

23. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 220.

24. These reforms saw the creation of four Soviet muftiates. For a discussion of the muftiates' establishment, see Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*.

25. On SADUM's establishment, see Shamsuddinxon Boboxonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon* (Tashkent, 2001), 41.

26. Turkestan was the one Muslim region of the Russian Empire that lacked its own muftiate. There is no evidence that the Russian muftiate, which continued to function throughout the Soviet period in Ufa, claimed any authority or recognition in Central Asia, despite its repeated efforts to assert some control over mosques in the region. On the Tsarist muftiates, see Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006); James Meyer, *Turkic Worlds: Community Representation and Collective Identity in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, 1870-1914* (Ph.D Dissertation, 2007, Brown University).

confronted a need to justify its existence and pretensions to authority as an Islamic body.

The question of the muftiate's leadership compounded this problem of legitimacy. For reasons that remain unclear, the Uzbek government recommended an old family of Naqshbandi Sufi shaykhs, the Boboxonovs, to run SADUM. Both the first mufti, Eshon Boboxon (1863-1957), and his son (and second mufti), Ziyovuddinxon (1908-1982), were arrested by the NKVD during the Great Terror and later released for lack of evidence of a crime. This was also true of many other high-profile figures in the first generation of SADUM's leadership.[27] Moreover, the available evidence suggests that the Boboxonov family's Naqshbandi lineage both furthered and complicated its quest for legitimacy.[28] On the one hand, the mufti and his associates could count on the support of an extensive network of disciples across Central Asia.[29] But on the other, they found themselves the subject of attacks from different quarters: some Muslim figures targeted their 'un-Islamic' practice of profiting from donations left at the shrines of saints[30], while certain local masters and scholars did not wish to relinquish authority to a body run by one particular family.[31] Thus, SADUM had pressing incentive to identify some moral foundation for its pretensions to legitimacy before suspicious circles, both official and religious.

To justify the muftiate's role and existence, the first mufti, Eshon Boboxon, identified World War II as a meeting ground for Soviet and Islamic narratives of righteousness. Circular letters sent out by Eshon Boboxon to imams stressed the religious nature of the task of rebuilding the country after Word War II. As the mufti knew, this genre of communication was likely to reach both official and popular audiences.[32] During the postwar years, when Ramadhan fell during the summer months of the cotton harvest, SADUM emphasized that observance of the Muslim fast must not result in any decrease in productivity. A circular letter to the mosques in 1947 attached moral importance to physical labor:

---

27. O'zRMDA r-2456/1/184/53 (1956). In fact, Eshon Boboxon was arrested twice, in 1937 and 1940. Amirsaidkhan Usmankhodzhaev, *Zhizn´ muftiev Babakhanovykh: sluzhenie vozrozhdeniiu islama v Sovetskom Soiuze* (Nizhnyi Novgorod, 2008), 36.

28. On the Boboxonovs' Naqshbandi roots, see Usmankhodzhaev, *Zhizn´ muftiev Babakhanovykh*, 26-27.

29. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/219 (1947); O'zRMDA r-2456/1/211/14 (October 10, 1957).

30. These complaints were voiced by the Islamic scholar Shafoat hoji Xoliqnazarov, who represented the 'ulama of the city of Osh (in southern Kyrgyzstan) to SADUM during the 1940s. He lamented that "never in history, from the days of God's Messenger to our time, have organizations based on the shari'a placed shrines under their protection and extracted profits from them." KRBMA 2597/1s/2/39ob-40ob (March 16, 1947).

31. For example, Shafoat hoji proposed the unification of the four Muslim boards into one muftiate for the whole Soviet Union, "for without a unitary center one can expect no order." KRBMA 2597/1s/2/33 (February 16, 1947).

32. SADUM's correspondence was reviewed by government officials, while appeals from the muftiate were often read out loud at mosques.

> As you know, our country, together with the whole people, is engaged in the revival and development of the national economy, destroyed during the patriotic war against the German invaders. In the near future, believing Muslims will observe Ramadhan. The harvest falls during the period of the fast. Therefore, you – qadis, imams, xatibs, and members of the executive organs and financial commissions [of the mosques] – must elucidate the unacceptability of any disruption in the gathering of the harvest to the believers in your mosques. Alongside observance of the fast believing Muslims must take active part in the gathering of the harvest, in order to show that they are good Soviet people (*dobrymi sovetskimi liud´mi*) […] Relying upon the ayats and ahadith, we demonstrate the necessity of observance of the laws of the government and the fulfillment of daily work norms […] the Supreme Lord has eased not only the burden of those who are sick and of those who are traveling, but also of the elderly, of breastfeeding women and of those engaged in difficult labor, of those for whom observance of the fast would present hardship. For example, train operators, ship captains, and pilots may skip the fast. The work *Khovat al-Fatavi* indicates that canal builders and miners may not fast if the heat would threaten their lives.[33]

Here the mufti placed Islam squarely at the center of the USSR's wellbeing. In this description, Central Asian Muslims had suffered no less from the Nazi invasion than other Soviet citizens. Both Islamic values and loyalty to a Soviet homeland compelled Central Asian Muslims to maximize their individual yields during the harvest, in order to help rebuild the country's economy. For most people, this would require abstaining from fasting.

The question naturally arises whether SADUM issued such statements at its own initiative or whether it received instructions from the government bureaucracy charged with monitoring its affairs, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), to do so. This particular message falls into the latter category. In light of the fact that Ramadhan would overlap with the harvest season, CARC's representative in Uzbekistan recommended that

> the leadership of SADUM write to its members, the financial control committees and imams of the registered mosques, so that they would use their sermons to stress that the believers not violate professional discipline in the kolkhozes and under no circumstances disrupt the course of agricultural work.

A CARC bureaucrat complained that

> the statement's unconvincing style makes it immediately clear that SADUM composed it not with heartfelt sincerity, but rather as if it merely wanted to get someone off its back (*kak budto-by otviazat´sia ot kogo-to*).

33. KRBMA 2678/1s/3/32-34 (July 12, 1947).

Furthermore, the muftiate took its time sending the message out, meaning that it did not arrive in many mosques until after the start of Ramadhan.[34] CARC's pressure on the muftiate in this instance does not invalidate the statement's content. Quite the contrary: it demonstrates how SADUM responded when forced to juggle state pressure and its own self-conceptualization as a righteous Islamic entity.

SADUM's output in different contexts reflects a similar trend. Fatwas, or formal legal opinions issued by Islamic scholars on a specific question, focused on issues of great concern to officialdom. One of the first, if not the first, legal opinions issued by Eshon Boboxon as mufti emerged some time between September and November of 1945, pronouncing animal sacrifice on 'Eid ul-Adha (Uzbek, *qurbon bayrami*; Kyrgyz, *kurman ayt*) a recommended deed based on the example of the Prophet (sunnah) rather than a requirement (*vojib*).[35] Early 1947 saw Tashkent pronouncing the *paranji* and *chachvon* – long regarded by the Communist Party as the most offensive embodiment of Islam's oppression of women – as non-obligatory according to the Muslim faith.[36] Although SADUM clearly sought to align itself with the state's wishes, these fatwas also found precedent in the Jadid critique of popular religion.

While the muftiate emphasized its devotion to the Soviet Union in communications with government officials, it deployed Islamic concepts when targeting the broader population. Eshon Boboxon argued that the consolidation of SADUM's authority constituted a righteous enterprise blessed by God. Therefore, Muslim communities must do the right thing and submit to his dogmatic and administrative authority in matters of the faith. To transmit this argument, he authored a communication in a 1945 issue of SADUM's journal lamenting the fact that Muslims paid *zakat* and *fitr-sadaqa* i.e. charity, not to the muftiate but to individual mullas:

> During the time of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and under Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, specially designated collectors gathered *zakat*, *ushur*, and *fitr-sadaqa*, mandatory obligations for every Muslim, and placed them in the treasury for expenditure on the general welfare of the Muslims […] Nowadays, mullas engaged in self-aggrandizement are the cause of improper use [of these funds] […] Insofar as these charitable funds are spent not on the needs of the faith but on general interests, the affairs of the Muslims and their religious leaders are in a mournful state. It is widely known that in the localities these dealings continue in an unofficial capacity.[37]

The mufti and his close associates viewed SADUM as an entity serving the greater good. Maximizing its material foundation through acquisition of cash and resources would enhance the capacity of the organization, allowing it to better serve the

34. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/316 (October 21, 1947).

35. KRBMA 2597/1s/11/167 (December 21, 1949), 2597/1s/4/219 (March-April 1947).

36. KRBMA 2597/1s/5/21 (August 10, 1948), 2597/1s/7/89 (July 15, 1948). On the Soviet campaign against the paranji and chachvon see Douglas Northrop: *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, 2004); Marianne Kamp. *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle, 2006).

37. KRBMA 2678/1s/1/76-78 (1945).

needs of Central Asian Muslims and to advance other righteous causes. Ordinary Muslims should therefore eschew contact with religious figures not affiliated with SADUM, offering the muftiate their spiritual confidence and financial support instead. To justify such an historically unprecedented proposition (in Central Asia, at least) this message mobilizes the powerful example of the Prophet, whose words and actions Sunnis revere as the ultimate example all Muslims must follow, as well as that of the rightly guided caliphs, emulation of whom is recommended. In doing so, it transmits the implicit thesis that SADUM's activities in the context of the Soviet Union mirrored the mission of the Prophet and caliphs in their own time.

Unsurprisingly, Muslim communities responded to these appeals with a combination of sympathy and frustration. On the one hand, they welcomed the existence of an officially sanctioned religious organization, empowered to open mosques that enjoyed some degree of legal protection from overbearing local officials. But on the other, they harbored deep suspicion of the muftiate's centralizing ambitions. Communities expressed this ambivalence in terms that closely mirrored the organization's appeals to Soviet and Islamic affiliation.

SADUM's showdown with local miners in the southern Kyrgyz city of Ko'k Yang'aq illustrates this response particularly well. Ko'k Yang'aq was and remains one of the mining-centered settlements that appeared during the Soviet period in southern Kyrgyzstan. In the 1940s its multi-ethnic population consisted almost exclusively of miners and their families, who left for the mines outside of town early in the morning and did not return home until the evening. Ko'k Yang'aq hosted one of the first mosques registered by CARC in the republic, with an imam named Mutigulla Asadullin.

Asadullin sympathized with the formidable working conditions faced by the miners every day. To this end, he encouraged local miners to perform as many of the daily prayers as possible at home rather than coming to the mosque. These pronouncements resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of Muslims coming to congregational prayers on days other than Friday.[38] This state of affairs outraged a local Sufi master, Murod Ortiqov, who was not employed by SADUM. Ortiqov arranged for the chairman of the mosque's executive committee, Daujanov, to compile a petition with twenty signatures requesting that SADUM remove Asadullin.[39] In a climate of palpable tension, Daujanov even interrupted the imam during one of his Friday sermons, virtually an unthinkable occurrence in Central Asia.[40] The exasperated miners rallied around Asadullin. At a spontaneously organized community meeting inside the mosque on July 29, 1947, the community fired Daujanov from his position on the executive committee *viva voce*.

38. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/217 (March-April 1947).

39. According to Soviet legislation on religion, every house of worship required a functionary, an executive committee in charge of finances, and a committee of twenty original signatories requesting permission to open a prayer house. The chairman of the executive committee often exercised considerable influence in the workings of mosques. Clashes between these chairmen and imams occurred frequently, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

40. KRBMA 2597/1s/10/82 (August 5, 1949).

SADUM resented this apparent affront to its authority. Not only had the community fired a mosque staff member without seeking the organization's approval, but it had done so with tacit approval from an imam who was responsible for low mosque attendance. It dispatched envoys to personally oversee Asadullin's removal and the installment of a new imam. Accusations leveled at him by these envoys included responsibility for the low numbers of Muslims attending the mosque, disrespect for holy sites and saints, "nationalism," and being "the ladies' imam" (*khatunlar imamy*) due to his efforts to encourage women to attend congregational prayers. Due to rock-solid local support for Asadullin, however, SADUM failed to implement his removal. The muftiate's only remaining recourse was to appeal to CARC for assistance. When the bureaucrats launched an inquiry, however, they received a petition signed by 438 residents of Ko'k Yang'aq, praising Asadullin and requesting that he be allowed to stay. In these circumstances, CARC decided to take no action and Asadullin remained in his position until at least 1959.[41]

The petition deliberately weaves together Soviet and Islamic themes in a conscious effort to present Asadullin as the embodiment of Islamically informed Soviet patriotism. While delicately avoiding any direct criticism of SADUM, it argues that the imam's presence advanced the miners' welfare, both as Muslims and as Soviet people:

> How can we Muslims, working in the mines for eight hours, come to the mosque five times a day? We cannot just drop our work and go to the mosque, but we do not want to see it closed either. When we have time, we pray one of the five daily prayers at the mosque, and feel joy that the state and the religious board allow it to function […] God-willing, we will not let go of our imam, who struggles with superstitions, those obstacles to the cultural advancement of the people […] our imam calls people to the true path, set down by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This petition describes a community of honest, hard-working Soviet citizens desiring nothing more than the presence of a single mosque in their community staffed by an understanding, morally upright imam. By referencing the Soviet concept of culture (*kul´turnost´*), they express a politically legitimate desire to advance their welfare and that of their families. Having established that they are "working Muslims" (*biz rabuchi musulmanlar*), they evoke the powerful affiliations of the "true path" (*sirat al-mustaqim*), taken out of the *fatiha* or the first and most frequently recited chapter of the Qur'an. This petition witnesses a Soviet Muslim community inscribing not only its Muslimness but its Sovietness as well.

World War II marked the end of concerted anti-religious violence in Soviet history.[42] It therefore gave people who identified as Muslim conceptual room to make sense of their contribution to the Soviet homeland in Islamic terms. For a centralizing body such as SADUM, this opening presented an opportunity to acquire

41. The text of the petition is in KRBMA 2597/1s/10/86-99 (May 13, 1949) and in Russian translation in l. 81-85.

42. Eren Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991* (Ph.D Dissertation, 2010, Harvard University).

sorely needed legitimacy. The muftiate's attempt to clarify its own role with respect to state and society, as well as popular responses to these efforts, appealed to a unitary set of Soviet and Islamic affiliations. Central Asian Muslims articulated an Islamically informed Soviet patriotism to advance their own pragmatic interests in religious life (as in the confrontation between SADUM and the miners over Asadullin), and to make sense of their role in a fundamentally new postwar social setting. The analysis will now turn to the manifestations of this process in the broader social life of Muslim communities beyond SADUM.

## A view from below: "ordinary" Muslims

If this patriotism carried resonance only for individuals working at the muftiate, or emerged solely in conflicts between SADUM and communities, then it would bear no relevance for our understanding of social life more broadly. In this case, one could potentially embrace the retrospective characterizations of SADUM adopted by some Muslims in Uzbekistan today. As one imam in his forties commented, "SADUM was a branch of the KGB [...] under the Russians it became a mechanism for spreading atheism."[43] This reasoning would suggest that the muftiate's appeals to Soviet and Muslim affiliation merely formed one component of a strategy to acquire power and money.

Clearly, the mufti and his associates wanted both. Yet available historical documentation suggests that this patriotism resonated far beyond the muftiate. Ordinary Muslims throughout Central Asia's cities and collective farms, whose patriotic actions (and sometimes words) have come down through the archival record, also expressed their sense of belonging to the USSR in an Islamic framework, most especially through mosque-based patriotic activism.

World War II loomed very large in the thoughts and moral vocabularies of all Soviet citizens in the second half of the 1940s, including Muslims. Against the backdrop of this cataclysm, many Central Asians discovered fertile ground for inscribing themselves and their communities in the broader Soviet narrative of sacrifice. It should not be surprising that the world's most violent conflict to date should have taken on a "religious" meaning for millions of people, Muslim or otherwise. Specifically, it would be counter-intuitive to suggest that patriotism and the ideological dimensions of the war took center stage in people's understanding of what was going on, while religion did not. There was ample room for Soviet patriotism, faith in God, Islamic tradition, and even animosity towards well-fed German capitalists to accommodate one another in a viable whole.

Muslims clearly attached Islamic and Soviet meanings to World War II. Hakim Akhtiamov, CARC's representative in Kyrgyzstan from 1945-1960, made a number of observations in this connection, undoubtedly stemming from his personal contacts with large numbers of Muslims.

43. Interview, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, July 8, 2006.

> Clearly some of the participants in the war made a pledge during the heat of battle, that they would "respect God" if He let them live. I find no other explanation for the fact that one encounters former *frontoviki* among the believers attending prayers.

Mirzakulov, a mechanic at an MTS decorated for bravery during the war, applied for admission to one of SADUM's madrasas immediately upon his return home. G'ulomov, a Komsomol member and Stakhanovite, wrote to Stalin vowing to gather 88 *tsentner*s (8,800 kg) of cotton per hectare. Afterwards, he started attending the mosque and "praying to God, for His 'help' in fulfilling the promise."[44] This sentiment extended to the soldiers' family members as well, many of whom had prayed for their loved ones' safe return and taken regular part in congregational prayers to this end during the war. For them, the Soviet victory and in many cases the soldiers' return amounted to nothing less than a miracle, a response from God to their pleas.[45] Imams both registered and unregistered viewed the war as an opportunity to harmonize religious belief with loyalty to the Soviet state. Akhtiamov noted that mullas attempted to perform religious rituals and services clandestinely from 1930-1942, but that especially in 1942-1943 they did so much more openly. In 1947 the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyz SSR awarded two prominent Islamic figures the order of "Gallant Service during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945" in recognition of their "patriotic activities" during the conflict.[46]

World War II's significance as a focus for Soviet and Islamic narratives of righteousness remained intact during the 1940s. In one telling instance immediately after Germany's defeat, an unregistered mulla named Bokoleev attended collective meetings in two separate kolkhozes dedicating to discussing the significance of Victory Day. At his initiative, those present assented to including a resolution in the meetings' protocols highlighting the beneficial character of religion for humanity. Both protocols passed reviews by the district Communist Party committee with no objection; only at the provincial level did Party officials "note the inappropriateness of referencing religious propaganda in a resolution dedicated to Victory Day."[47] The salience of the war as both a patriotic and religious watershed also emerges in the large donations made by Muslim communities to various funds supporting causes related to the conflict and its aftermath. Total donations to the Fund for Soldiers' Families from registered mosques amounted to 683,584 rubles for 1944 and the first half of 1945.[48] From October 1945 to April 1946, the 4-5 mosques in Frunze province donated 135,182 rubles and 12,610 kilograms of grain to

44. KRBMA 2597/1s/10/9 (January 27, 1949).

45. KRBMA 2597/1s /1/84 (July 6, 1946).

46. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/171 (March 11, 1947). These were the aforementioned Shafoat hoji Xoliqnazarov as well as SADUM's qadi in Kyrgyzstan, Olimxon to'ra Shokirxo'jayev. It is not what they did to earn the award.

47. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/5 (July 10, 1945). This particular incident occurred in Stalin district, Frunze province (today's Chüy province, surrounding the capital, Bishkek, in the north).

48. KRBMA 2597/1s /1/7 (July 10, 1945).

Gosobespechenie, requesting that the latter earmark it for families of soldiers who died at the front.[49] The two mosques in Jalalabat and Ko'k Yang'aq collected 5,200 rubles for the same purpose.[50] The mosque in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh transferred 18,000 rubles and 6 *tsentner*s or 600 kilograms of traditional bread (Uzbek, *non*; Russian, *lepeshka*) from the Muslims of Osh to that fund.[51] It also bears mentioning that although CARC did not record specific instances of unregistered mosques making patriotic donations, they almost certainly did: Akhtiamov noted that "the political and economic life of Muslims remains identical, not depending on the presence or absence of a registered mosque."[52]

Mosques did not limit themselves to donations in the organization of patriotic activities. Muslims also engaged in charitable actions geared towards facilitating the maximization of the volume of the harvest. Elderly Muslims and imams went out into the fields around Osh, collecting 150 tons of cotton, a figure certified in writing by the management of the local kolkhoz.[53] In Jalalabat a group of 180 elderly Muslims earthed up 10 hectares of cotton fields in an organized fashion.[54] Akhtiamov commented that he encountered the organization of agricultural work by imams most often in the Farghona Valley, where Muslims regarded the gathering of cotton as a "helpful" deed.[55] When the imams did not organize such participation in agricultural work, they sought to facilitate the harvest in other ways. In one instance in 1946, a prominent Islamic scholar arranged the delivery of food to kolkhozniki working in the fields around Osh, including 700 kilograms of grain and a large quantity of dairy products. Right around the same time, an unregistered mulla in rural Osh district, Zaynuddin Sulaymanov, delivered a lecture at the general meetings of a number of sel'sovets in the Madyn kolkhoz, entitled "The Restoration and Development of the USSR's National Economy". Sulaymanov spoke at the request of representatives of the Party's district committee.[56]

Officialdom could not help but hold Muslims in some esteem for their demonstrations of loyalty and enthusiasm for the postwar tasks facing people and state. The quarterly and annual reports filed by CARC's representatives in 1945 and 1946 all contain separate sections detailing the "patriotic activities of the believers" (*patrioticheskaia deitael´nost´ veruiushchikh*), an indication that the addressees of this correspondence in Moscow did not deem this phenomenon unworthy of attention. At the local level, some Soviet officials saw nothing unusual

49. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/53 (1946).

50. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/ 70 (June 1, 1946).

51. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/421 (December 25, 1947). Like SADUM, Gosobespechenie could sell any incoming non-cash donations at the market value (*po rynochnoi tsene*).

52. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/131 (September 30, 1946).

53. 1s / 4 / 421 (December 25, 1947).

54. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/70 (June 1, 1946).

55. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/170 (March 11, 1947).

56. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/142 (November 14, 1946).

in Muslims' full contribution to the reconstruction of the economy after the war. In some instances, they clearly expected such contributions on the part of Muslims. Gosobespechenie's office in Chüy district, Frunze province approached the mosque in Tokmuk with a list of 20 *frontovniki* and their families, asking them to distribute charitable contributions directly to the latter. In this instance the charity amounted to 30 *pud*s or almost 500 kg of corn.[57] In yet another occurrence, a representative of Özgön's city hall (*gorispolkom*) came to the registered mosque during prayers. He requested the assistance of those present in digging a canal for the construction of a power station. In an organized fashion the Muslims got to work (*ne plokho porabotali*). Akhtiamov's only objection was that the *gorispolkom* had not made the request through CARC.[58] Elsewhere, the deputy head of Frunze city call wrote that city's mosque an official letter, asking it to help Gosobespechenie assist the families of fallen soldiers. This bureaucrat, himself ethnically Russian, even went on to inform the Muslims that the organization's district branches did not have sufficient funds to cope with demand.[59] These examples suggest that many local officials viewed imams and Muslims as partners in the rebuilding of the country.

In fact, a significant segment of officialdom itself practiced religion in one way or another. State and Party records list thousands of incidents wherein Communists observed customs identified by the population as Islamic, such as circumcision, the payment of bride price, and the organization of feasts, often on a colossal scale, to celebrate major life cycle events. Muslim Communists appear to have observed the circumcision of their sons and related festivities (*sunnat to'y*) with particular dedication. For the most part the records identify low-level officials, namely the secretaries of kolkhoz and MTS party organizations, as believers. Nevertheless, not infrequently they mention high-level state and party employees at the district level. For example, in Ala Buka (Ola Bo'qa) district, Jalalabat province, the head of one kolkhoz sought and received the permission of both the Party and government district committee chairmen to organize festivities on the circumcision of his son. Lasting from December 20-22, 1947, the feast saw the attendance

> of all the kolkhoz and sel´sovet heads, the secretaries of the Party organizations and many district workers, 500 people in total, who were lodged in 25 homes […] Schools and village organizations did not work for three days. Our information suggests such instances are hardly isolated in Ala Buka.[60]

Elsewhere, the heads of the Internal Affairs Ministry branches in Jetti Oguz district, Ysyk Köl province and the city of Osh both circumcised their sons.[61]

57. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/84 (July 6, 1946).

58. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/216 (March-April 1947).

59. KRBMA 2597/1s/1/5 (July 10, 1945).

60. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/407 (January 2, 1948).

61. KRSDBMA 56/4/665/157 (July 26, 1948).

In Bozor Qo'rg'on district, Osh province – regarded as among the two or three most "religious" regions in the republic – the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department at the Party's district committee organized a feast to celebrate his son's circumcision, inviting all the highly-placed authorities in the area as well as many kolkhoz heads.[62] It was apparently very common for officials organizing *sunnat to'y*s to invite their highly placed colleagues – so much so that a declaration of the Kyrgyz Communist Party singled this phenomenon out for special criticism.[63] District officials may have seen the festivities as valuable networking opportunities, both for career advancement and local prestige. Reflecting the wide currency of these examples, Akhtiamov admitted that a significant number of Communists circumcised their sons.[64] It bears mentioning that such references appear as frequently with respect to the north as to the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan.

Continuing this line of analysis, it seems plausible to suggest that the Muslim population did not regard membership in the Communist party and identification with the Muslim faith as morally problematic. In this connection the list of Muslim Communists extends far beyond incidents related to circumcision. For example, the second secretary of the Party's district committee in Kochkor, Naryn province, invited imams to read the funeral prayer for his mother-in-law. A significantly more important figure, the head of the Internal Affairs Ministry in Talas province, buried his mother in the same fashion.[65] The chair of the Propaganda and Agitation Department at the Party's Jangy Jol district committee (Jalalabat province) took a second wife, sealed by an Islamic contract in the presence of an imam.[66] In Przheval´sk, at the eastern tip of Ysyk Köl, a Communist and former head of the city's housing department – a crucial post in any Soviet city – attended congregational prayers on 'Eid ul-Adha with his 14 year old son, Marlen.[67] Nor did surrounding Muslims not belonging to the Party necessarily regard their fellow Muslim Communists as anything otherwise. When a Party member died in Jetti Oguz district, Ysyk Köl province, her family insisted on a burial with Islamic rites. CARC's deputy in the province asked the officiating unregistered imam why he assented to performing the funeral prayer over an atheist. The latter replied that the women in question believed in God, and that her membership in the Party amounted to a purely formal affair.[68]

None of this means that Kyrgyzstan's Communist Party lacked in ethnically Kyrgyz and Uzbek members who did not believe in God and severed all ties,

62. KRBMA 2597/1s/11/28 (March 28, 1949) As head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, he held primary responsibility in the district for organizing anti-religious propaganda.

63. KRSDBMA 56/4/589/170-171 (August 30, 1946).

64. KRBMA 2597/1s/4/394 (January 22, 1948).

65. KRBMA 2597/1s/7/88 (July 15, 1948).

66. KRBMA 2597/1s/7/125 (June 27, 1948).

67. KRBMA 2597/1s/ 8/50 (September 2, 1948). *Marlen*: an abbreviation of "Marx-Lenin."

68. KRBMA 2597/1s/ 4/307 (October 21, 1947).

cultural and philosophical, with Islam. But these examples do suggest that those wishing to cherish the goal of building Communism, the values of Islam (including one's ties with the all-important ancestors), and patriotism for the Soviet Union had a *viable* way of doing all and one at the same time. It is clear that Muslims from a diverse array of settings found a way to harmonize these different affiliations: from the hujras of the muftiate in Tashkent, to the mines of southern Kyrgyzstan, to Osh and a large number of Communist Party organizations.

## Conclusion

By questioning how different Muslims negotiated belonging to Islamic and Soviet communities, this paper has attempted to shed light on the war's socio-religious significance for Central Asia and its population. Central Asian Muslims appraised World War II, and its legacy for state and society, in terms both Soviet and Islamic. This argument adds a new dimension to our understanding of the war's profound impact upon this region. Aside from other documented consequences of the cataclysm – the dispatch of Central Asian men to the Soviet-Nazi front, the evacuation of specialists and intellectuals as well as the arrival of migrants from the Western USSR into Tashkent and other cities, and the relocation of industry from front line regions – Central Asia experienced profound transformation in the religious sphere as well. Relaxed or non-existent controls on religion engendered a new field of possibilities that took direct inspiration from the war.

This outcome indicates the need to pursue an "on-the-ground" approach towards understanding how the USSR's citizens made sense of being Soviet, even as it suggests that scholars should reexamine the role of religion in framing popular understandings of the war. Ordinary people digested their affiliation with the USSR and Communism in ways the state clearly did not intend. Notably, Central Asian Muslims attached symbolic value to the reforms of 1943-1944, even though the Stalinist Party-state framed them solely in terms of closely supervised and curtailed religious institutions. Throughout the country, popular understandings of being Soviet clearly differed from those articulated in official sources.[69] Like other Soviet citizens, many (though not all) developed ways of finding peace with the society they lived in, despite memories of the transformative violence of earlier decades.

*Indiana University-Purdue University*
*Indianopolis (IUPUI)*

*emtasar@gmail.com*

69. Of course, popular understandings of what it meant to be Muslim also differed from those advanced by learned Islamic scholars, such as the 'ulama who staffed SADUM.